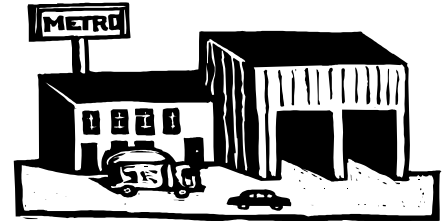# CHAPTER 11

How to Build a Partnership with Your Community

Why Should You Get Involved with Your Community?

We all care about the environment in which we live, work, and play. We want to feel that we are safe from things like fire, crime, and pollution --- external hazards that affect whole communities. As a printer, you are, of course, an important part of the community in which you operate. As a community member, you must do your part to keep the environment clean and healthy. And some community members want to know what the businesses in their area are doing to protect the environment. Therefore, your role may include not only minimizing your facility's impact on the environment, but also keeping interested community members informed of these efforts. By informing people and letting them see what you do, you can build trust and credibility with your community.

How Can You Get to Know Your Community?

Whether or not you have public involvement requirements under PrintSTEP, it's worth the time to talk with groups and neighbors you haven't communicated with before, to get a feel for who might be interested in your facility's activities.

Keep in mind that all of your efforts are helping to build a partnership with your community that will benefit both you and them. When community members aren't informed of new developments, they may assume that the situation is worse than it is. The best way for you to avoid this is to communicate openly with them about your facility. Some ways to do this beyond formal public involvement requirements are:

➢ Invite community members in for a facility tour. By explaining your processes and showing them how you handle your wastes, you are building trust.

➢ Publicize any emissions reduction goals you may have, and report your progress. This lets people know that you are concerned about the environment and are actively trying to reduce your environmental impact.

➢ Communicate early and often with the public about your operations, particularly if you are planning new projects.

Keep the Conversation Going

Once you get acquainted with the different members of your community, it is important to engage in a continuing dialogue to foster your relationship. Besides the PrintSTEP requirements for public participation, here are some suggestions to keep the community informed.

➢ Hold meetings to gather public comments on your company's operations. These are not meant to tell you how to run your shop. Rather, they provide a forum for both you and community members to air concerns about the environment, clarify misunderstandings, and find workable solutions.

➢ Offer your employees opportunities to participate in the community as "ambassadors" of your printing business through company-sponsored service projects or other arrangements. By encouraging your workers to talk with others about your shop and to bring back peoples' concerns, you will set an example of trust and openness with your staff that will build credibility with your community.

Involving the Public Early: Everyone Benefits

Let's say that you work through Step 4 of PrintSTEP and find you have requirements for Full Public Involvement based on your releases. However, instead of waiting until the state sends out notice, you decide that you would like to hear about the community's concerns now, early in the process. So, you announce a facility Open House.

During the Open House, you meet some of your neighbors and other community members. You give them a tour and they ask a lot of questions about your processes. Some people ask questions about your use of solvents. They are concerned about the health risk from inhalation of vapors, both inside and outside the facility. You explain the things you've done to reduce emissions, as well as why you are using certain technologies. They are curious about how much a new press (that you plan to install later in the year) will increase emissions. At the end of the tour, the participants are enthusiastic about the steps you've taken so far to reduce emissions, but they ask to have another tour after your new press is installed.

The tour has helped the community understand your process. When it's time for public comment and involvement as part of PrintSTEP, your community will be more informed. You may have even answered all of their concerns, in which case a formal public meeting may not be needed, expediting the PrintSTEP process.

Who Gets Actual Notice or How is the Community Defined?

In PrintSTEP, the community will receive notice of each application for a PrintSTEP Agreement. One type of notice is "Actual Notice to the community," as described in Chapter 9. But who is included in "the community?" Every community is different, as is every printer. No hard-and-fast definition can describe all of the diverse communities throughout the U.S. To figure out who gets Actual Notice of the PrintSTEP Agreement and application, the relevant community has to be defined. This definition must strike a delicate balance between including everyone who may be affected or interested in the facility, and setting boundaries to avoid overwhelming people with notices. The PrintSTEP Stakeholder Advisory Group, with community, industry, and government representatives, established guidelines for who receives Actual Notice. The Advisory Group considered the following aspects in defining the community:

➢ All abutters are part of the community.

➢ The Advisory Group will consider using a radial **distance** appropriate to the population density of the area. For example, while a mile radius may be appropriate

for a moderately populated areas, it may be unrealistic in a very densely populated area.

➢ Sensitive populations nearby will be considered, such as a nursing home, school, playground, or day care center. Each of these groups might have different sets of concerns.

➢ Disproportionately affected populations might be especially concerned about facilities in the area. In the past, poor and minority communities have often suffered more than other communities from exposure to environmental pollution.

➢ Natural boundaries will be taken into consideration, such as a watershed area, that extends beyond man-made borders.

➢ The Advisory Group will also consider involving existing groups. If local groups (e.g., local businesses and their employees, groups concerned with the environment, environmental justice advocates, health advocacy groups, religious institutions) serve as forums for interested community members to voice their concerns, this might help to define the community.

Environmental Risk and Risk Management

The factors that will be considered in determining who gets Actual Notice are similar to the factors considered when evaluating environmental risk. Simply put, environmental risk is the chance that some hazard to health or the environment will occur. One approach to evaluating risk is called risk assessment. While risk assessment is not a part of PrintSTEP, it is described here to give you a fuller understanding of how some environmental decisions are made.

Risk assessment is an evaluation of the potential for a problem to occur and the scientific analysis of its threat to human health and the environment. The evaluation may include information on how harmful the chemical is and whether it is more dangerous if a person drinks it, breaths it, or gets it on their skin (hazard); information on the likelihood of people or the environment coming into contact with the chemical (exposure); and the length and frequency of contact.

Although risk assessments are based on science, they are rarely precise because absolute data almost never exist. Additionally, most assessments consider just one chemical, one environmental medium (air, water, or land), and one risk at a time, so the results are not always reflective of   real life" circumstances. It is also important to note that conducting a formal risk assessment can be a time-consuming and expensive process.

Risk management is the process of identifying, evaluating, selecting, and taking actions to reduce risks to human health and to ecosystems. This process tries to account for social, cultural, ethical, political, and legal considerations.

In deciding how best to manage risks at a particular facility, a number of factors may be evaluated (See Figure 4). The importance of each of these factors will depend on the circumstances. These factors may include:

> **Size of the Facility** What is the total number of employees? How many employees perform activities of specific concern?

> **Impacted Population** What is the population density? Are residents or sensitive populations nearby?

> **Permit Releases** Is the facility seeking a new permit or a modification of an existing permit?

> **Regulatory Thresholds** What regulatory thresholds apply to air, water, and hazardous waste?

> **Compliance History** Has the facility complied with state and local regulations, emergency planning and community right to know requirements, OSHA requirements, etc.?

> **Baseline Environmental Quality** What is the existing quality of air, water, land; proximity to sensitive eco-systems; proximity to other industries; and potential cumulative impact from all emission sources?

> **Agreements Between Facilities and Communities** Does the facility have an on-going relationship with the community?

Figure 4: Factors to Consider in Evaluating Risk

current permit status

baseline environmental quality

impacted populations

size of facility

facility-community agreements

permit releases

compliance history